What Is Measured?
Percentage of Virginia Community College students who enrolled in different levels of developmental writing within four years

Who Is Counted?
First-time Virginia Community College students enrolled in the summer or fall 2004 terms who enrolled in developmental writing

What It Tells Us
About one-half (53 percent) of incoming Virginia Community College students who enrolled in developmental writing courses took a developmental writing course two levels below the college level, while 33 percent enrolled in a course one level below the college level and 14 percent enrolled in courses both one and two levels below college level.

Why It's Important
For students in need of developmental education, enrolling in specific courses mandated by the placement test is the first step toward advancement to a college-level program. Many students never enroll in developmental courses at the level at which they are assessed, however (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Because placements are not always binding, many students enroll in higher- or lower-level courses. Some may skip courses in the remedial sequence or skip developmental education altogether (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). As a result, the rates at which students enroll in developmental courses provide an incomplete picture of the need for remediation. Placement information, however, is rarely available, leaving enrollment rates as the only measure for gauging students’ college readiness.

ABOUT THE DATA
Developmental reading courses: includes reading one level below the college level (ENG05) and two levels below the college level (ENG04). First-time college students enrolled in a Virginia Community College System (VCCS) college in the summer or fall 2004 terms who had no prior college credits other than those earned through high school dual-enrollment programs. The sample includes students in transfer and career-tech programs as well as those concurrently enrolled in high school. These students were followed for four years through the 2008 summer term.

DATA SOURCE